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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

OLL85-1999/7

19 SEP 1985

The Honorable Jack Brooks²⁰¹
Chairman
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to your request for the views of the Central Intelligence Agency on H.R. 2889, a bill introduced by Congressman Glickman to provide for a computer security research program and training of federal employees who are involved in the management, operation, and use of computers. Mr. Casey has asked me to respond on his behalf.

There is little doubt that the Federal Government needs to improve the security of its computers. Computers now store a very large amount of highly classified data and sensitive information and have become a target for hostile foreign powers engaged in espionage. Should a foreign power gain access to this Agency's computers or those of agencies of the Intelligence Community, the harm to national security would be extraordinary. In addition to the threat from hostile intelligence services, the Agency must also be mindful of the threat posed by the so-called "hackers" who illegally break into government computers.

The Agency has a very active program underway to safeguard its computers from unauthorized access. This program includes the procuring of both hardware and software designed to ensure the highest degree of security. There is also a research program underway designed to create new systems capable of defeating the most determined and sophisticated means of accessing our computers without authorization. Finally, we conduct a very rigorous program to educate our employees on computer security awareness and good security practice. We believe this program has been highly successful in safeguarding our information.

We believe that the Agency has adequate authority to protect the security of its computers. However, should the Government Operations Committee decide to go forward with government-wide legislation, we believe that the bill should be amended to preserve the authority of the DCI to safeguard Agency computers against unauthorized access. Specifically, we suggest that the following language be inserted into the Bill:

Nothing in this bill alters the existing authorities of the Director of Central Intelligence, including his responsibility for the protection of intelligence sources and methods.

Adding this language to the bill will ensure that the Agency will be able to continue its own very strict mandatory training of personnel in computer security in accordance with established guidelines tailored to meet the security requirements of the Agency. This mandatory computer security program is more stringent than most other agencies that do not regularly deal in classified information. A single set of regulations to cover all federal agencies that does not accommodate the particular security needs of individual agencies is not the most effective means to provide the necessary protection needed for computers containing our nation's most sensitive secrets.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this legislation. If you or your staff have any questions on our comments on this bill, please do not hesitate to contact me or

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The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the submission of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

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Charles A. Briggs
Director, Office of Legislative Liaison

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